***Section 1 Cover Sheets***

Nominee’s Name: Mrs. Lauri Ann Thomas Shoup

DOB: February 1, 1962

Address: 295 Debbie Drive

Indiana, PA 15701

Email Address: [laurishoup@comcast.net](mailto:laurishoup@comcast.net)

Phone #: 724-357-9001

Nominee’s School: Homer Center Elementary School,

Homer-Center School District, 45 Wildcat Lane, Homer City, PA 15748,

724-479-9077

School Profile: Rural

Number of Students in Nominee’s School: \_\_\_\_\_

Nominee’s School Address:

Homer-Center School District, 45 Wildcat Lane, Homer City, PA 15748

Building Principal’s Name:

Mr. Michael Stofa

Nominee’s School District:

Homer-Center School District, 45 Wildcat Lane, Homer City, PA 15748

Phone number: 724-479-9077

Number of students in school district:\_\_\_\_

Address: Homer-Center School District, 45 Wildcat Lane, Homer City, PA 15748

School District County: Indiana County

State Region: Region II

Nominee’s Intermediate Unit: ARIN IU 28

Nominee’s Name: Lauri Ann Thomas Shoup

Social Security Number \*\*\*\*-\*\*-3338 Certification: Elementary

Specific Certifications: Elementary K-6 and Reading Specialist

Total Years Teaching: 16 years: 15 years with my current school district: 6 years as a Title 1 Mathematics Teacher Grades 3 through 6; 3 years at Grade 5 teaching all subjects; 6 years at Grade 4; 1 year with another district

Subjects and Grades Currently Teaching  
 I currently teach mathematics as a specialty to three sections of 4th grade students each day and I teach English, Social Studies, Writing, and Spelling to my homeroom class of 22 students.

Nominator’s Name: Mr. Michael Stofa,

Nominator’s Address: Homer-Center School District, 45 Wildcat Lane, Homer City, PA

Zip Code: 15748

Relationship to Nominee: Principal, Director of Curriculum

Name of Local Newspaper: Indiana Gazette

Address of Local Newspaper: 899 Water Street, Indiana, PA 15701

Superintendent/Director’s Signature:\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Signature of Nominee:\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

***Section 2: Educational History and Professional Development***

1. **Employment History:**

Homer-Center School District (1993-present)

Homer-Center Elementary School

45 Wildcat Lane

Homer City, PA 15748

I taught Title 1 Math to students in Grades 3-6 from 1993-1999. I then taught Grades 4 and 5 (all subjects) from 2000 to 2004. Since 2004, I have been teaching Mathematics as a specialty in a block schedule to Grade 4 students (3 sections of about 25 students each day). I also teach Spelling, English, Writing, and Social Studies to my homeroom students. I have worked an extended school day several days per week as an after school tutor for the past four years.

Indiana Area School District (1991-1992)

501 East Pike Road

Indiana, PA 15701

I taught Grade 2 (all subjects) as a long term substitute teacher from December 1991- to June 1992 at East Pike Elementary School.

1. **Educational Experience:**

IUP (Indiana University of Pennsylvania), 2001-2003, Master of Education Degree in Literacy (PA Certification: Reading Specialist)

IUP (Indiana University of Pennsylvania), 1993-1995, Master of Education Degree in Educational Psychology

IUP (Indiana University of Pennsylvania), 1987-1991, Bachelor of Science Degree in Elementary Education with a Minor in Educational Psychology (PA Instructional II Certificate, Magna Cum Laude, Dean’s List all semesters, Provost’s Scholar 1991, Pennsylvania Council of Teachers of Mathematics Math Student Teacher of the Year 1990.)

1. **Professional Development Activities:**

Member, Phi Delta Kappa International (Honor Society in Education) (2003-Present)

Member, National Council of Teachers of Mathematics (1993-Present) (National)

Member, Pennsylvania Council of Teachers of Mathematics (1993-Present) (State)

Member, Homer-Center Education Association (HCEA) (1993-Present) (Local)

Member, Pennsylvania State Education Association (PSEA) (1993-Present) (State)

Member, Parent Teacher Association (PTA) (1993-Present) (Local)

**C) Professional Development Activities (Continued):**

I currently have 117.5 hours toward Act 48 Professional Development from 2005-present.

These hours include credit for attendance at the National Council of Teachers of Mathematics Regional Conference in Cleveland, OH, October 2008; Reading textbook adoption and curriculum activities; District Strategic Planning; Response to Intervention (RtI)training; PSSA Data Analysis; attendance at the Pennsylvania Council of Teachers of Mathematics Conference in Valley Forge, PA, November 2007; several Mathematics curriculum development workshops, supervision of student teachers, and other local curriculum development projects.

I completed 1,088.5 hours toward Act 48 Professional Development from 2000-2005. These hours included coursework at IUP toward a second Master of Education Degree in Literacy; attendance at workshops for reading, science, math, technology, and conflict resolution. I also supervised student teachers, analyzed PSSA data, worked extensively on local curriculum, and worked on a extended school year program for students.

**D) Local Staff Development:**

I am a member of the Teachers & Administration Problem Solving (TAPS) Committee, and have been a member of several textbook adoption committees for science, reading, and math. I am also currently serving on a Positive Behavior Planning Committee. I have worked on Strategic Planning for Social Studies and Technology and other curriculum development committees as well. When I worked as a Title 1 Mathematics teacher, I created weekly tip sheets for each teacher K-6, developed workshops for teachers, taught demonstration lessons in classrooms Grades 3-6, worked as a co- teacher in multiple classrooms, and developed workshops for parents & children.

**E) Training for Future Teachers:**

I serve regularly as a cooperating teacher for Indiana University of Pennsylvania (IUP) Student Teacher Program. I have experience with each level of pre-service teachers --Freshman: observation and shadowing; Junior: Pre-Student Teaching Experience/Clinical Experience 1, and Senior: Student Teaching Experience/Clinical Experience 2.

I have worked with ARIN IU28 to assist workshop developers to create workshops for in-service teachers. These developers have gathered information from me and my students through classroom observations, student projects, interviews, and paired teaching.

I guest lectured on the topic of literature circles at IUP: “Mosaic in Action” (Summer 2003 & 2004).

I have served as a yearlong mentor to a new teacher of mathematics.

**F) Honors:**

I was awarded a $500 grant award from McDonald’s “Make Activities Count” (MAC) program (2003).

I was Wal-Mart’s “Teacher of the Year 2003” (local honor).

***Section 3: Professional Philosophy***

“Good teachers are those who know how little they know. Bad teachers are those who think they know more than they don’t know.” R. Verdi. If this quotation is true, then I am a good teacher. I may even be a great teacher, because I am totally aware of how much I have yet to learn. Nevertheless, I have some opinions about what has led to this nomination and would like to share a few of the rewards of teaching, and how my beliefs about teaching have influenced my personal teaching style.

First, what makes me an outstanding teacher has less to do with me and more to do with the excellent environment in which I teach. I can’t imagine anyone getting to be Teacher of the Year without a terrific copy girl to deliver copies on time or tremendous secretaries to get those forgotten lunches delivered to the door at exactly the moment they are needed. I can’t imagine getting to be a Teacher of the Year without a committed maintenance staff to keep the classroom clean, safe, and warm, or dedicated parents to support their child’s daily learning goals. Who can reach this milestone without creative colleagues to bounce and refine ideas or great administrators dedicated to backing up your every move? Who imagines they can do this job without an expert learning support team or understanding family? I have all those things and more. I would be remiss to ignore the exceptional educational environment that is allowing me to work toward my greatest potential.

Another contributing factor to my success in the classroom has been the idea that I haven’t forgotten what it’s like to be a child. I know how hard it is not to be excited when something with bells and whistles gets dragged out of a closet. I know how easy it is to feel like a failure when something new just doesn’t click. I remember how hard it can be to concentrate when something sad or unsettling happens at home just before heading out the door. I fully understand those light bulb moments and the joy that goes along with making your teacher smile.

That sensitivity for the heart of a ten-year old translates into my daily teaching. Before I introduce a difficult concept, I tell them, “I know this will be hard for you but we’ll do lots of problems together and I know you’ll get it.” Or, “In a minute, we’re going to try a new game. You should expect to have fun but you’ll have to show self control, too.” Sometimes I say, “You’re so smart and I know this is going to be a pattern you’ll pick up right away.” This compassion for those tender hearts targets both individual and whole class expectations and supports positive classroom management concurrently.

Secondly, there are many rewards in teaching. It is very satisfying to live as a life-long learner. There is a constant challenge to learn new material and adapt to new tools and technology for presenting information. I love that there are no two days alike in an elementary classroom and there’s always a story to tell. Last week, I listed all the multiples of 9 on the board and a child raised his hand to say his “third grade teacher got those exact same answers last year.” Stories like that etch smiles on my heart every day. I’m at the fun place where I get to see how fourth graders eventually turn into grownups and I find it very gratifying to talk with former students as they prepare for higher education. Henry B. Adams said, “A teacher affects eternity; he can never tell where his influence stops.” I’m beginning to understand that concept.

Finally, my philosophy of education has its foundation in the humanistic perspective described by Abraham Maslow. Maslow suggests the nature of humans is essentially good. Failures happen each day, but I never assume they are intentional and no one fails without creating a fresh place to begin again. Each failure offers an opportunity to learn and grow and work toward true independence which Maslow names “self actualization.” My surest belief is that children want to be good and that they want to do good things. When children fall short of classroom goals for behavior or learning, that’s a signal they may need more tools to help them reach success. That’s the fun and challenging part for me: trying to create a learning place where each child gets what he or she needs.

Maslow talks about three categories of needs: safety and security, belongingness and love, and esteem. I try to set my classroom apart in an effort to address these needs. I tell my kids that I can’t control any part of their day except what happens in my space. In support of developing an environment that feels safe, we have signs designed by the students that say “In this room, we are…” followed by a list of adjectives the students created in WordArt. The words include “respected”, “responsible”, “honorable”, “safe”, and “caring” etc. I point to these adjectives when children model these behaviors or need a reminder of how they should be conducting themselves especially in this room.

To reinforce the concept of belonging and love, we keep an Act of Kindness book where children are noticed for doing the right things for themselves, other students, the classroom, our school, or me. There are multiple vehicles in place for validating their self worth: Students get to hit the “Easy Button” for great work; I call or email parents right from my desk to brag about a milestone (today I called a parent to say their child had a perfect spelling paper—his first ever!); we cheer for each other whenever a goal is reached.

In summary, my ultimate belief is that children are essentially good and I have an important role in validating and influencing both who they are and who they might become. My classroom is a nurturing, supportive, and challenging place to be and my students are happy and achieving new things every day. I have the pure joy of learning alongside them while collecting precious anecdotes each day. I certainly didn’t arrive at this place all by myself and offer most of the credit to the fantastic work environment in which I have been placed. On any given day, you can come to my school and have your pick of “Teachers of the Year” and I am honored to have an opportunity to represent this community of highly qualified professionals.

***Section 4: The Teaching Profession***

**J: Major Issues in Education Today:**

There are many people with high stakes in the educational system including learners, parents, administrators, communities, and more. For each of these groups, there are innumerable issues and concerns. When asked to describe the major issues in public education today, the three things that come immediately to my mind are the inequitable distribution of funds for public education K-12, the soaring costs of college or higher public education, and the need for fostering parental involvement in the school. I will describe each of the first two issues briefly, and I will elaborate on parent partnerships with schools in detail.

Current accountability standards dictate that all students in the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania will perform on the PSSA at the proficient level by the year 2014. What seems unfair about that goal is that some school districts have access to more materials, more money, more highly qualified teachers, and even more secure family homes than others while being held responsible for the same achievement. If learners in the Commonwealth are going to have any chance of meeting these high standards *equally*, then time needs to be invested in providing for a more predictable and equitable distribution of resources.

I am also concerned about the high cost of education at colleges and other settings of higher learning. As teachers, we tell children education is the key to their future security but we don’t tell them they may not be able to afford to continue their education. In a recently published article for the *New York Times* (December 3, 2008), Tamar Lewin referenced the report “*Measuring Up 2008*.” This document compared net college costs against median family income. In 2007, that net cost was “about 28% of the median family income, while a four year private university cost 76% of the median family income.” The article goes on to compare the cost of tuition and fees for poorer families (more like those in my own school district) and discloses those families have to provide somewhere between 49% and 55% of their income for tuition and fees. This forces families to finance their child’s education on credit which may be impossible for them to pay back if they qualify at all. This is especially concerning given the current economic climate of the United States in general and the conditions in my rural school district in particular. My students won’t be able to afford to live their best lives because their educational experiences will be retarded by the elevated costs of higher public education.

Having worked in a Title 1 Mathematics program for 6 years where parental participation was an integral part of the program’s design, I know firsthand the important role parents play in success at school. Parent involvement sends a positive message to children about the value of education and helps create consistent expectations for achievement that can expand the classroom into the home. Parent involvement has long been viewed as a valuable predictor of student success. My classroom parents help organize celebrations, attend holiday, award, and other assemblies, eat lunch with their child, help my students with homework, partner with me on behavioral or exceptional learning needs, and so much more.

My experience has demonstrated when parents are involved, students have higher grades, test scores, and better attendance in school, increased motivation to learn, and better self-esteem. Sadly, I also know parent participation is currently declining for a variety of reasons. In my own classroom, I have many families working more than one job. Parenting roles are now being shared with other caregivers including grandparents. This limits the parents’ availability to conference with me or to attend school events. I have several families wrestling with unemployment or who have expressed they had unhappy school experiences themselves. I have some families who admit to feeling helpless because they do not fully understand the concepts their child is learning and they don’t want to appear unable in front of their child.

I try to stay connected to my families in whatever way they feel comfortable. I send home weekly messages to all my math families telling what I taught this week and what I expect to teach next week so they can feel informed. I take pictures of my students doing terrific (and ordinary) things to give them a glimpse of their child’s school work. I access parents regularly with notes to home, calls or emails from my classroom, or face-to-face conferences when needed. I still have parents I’ve never met. I tell those students to go home and tell their parents I dyed my hair purple just to see if I can attract the curious ones.

Families are an invaluable resource to teachers and relationships with parents need to be encouraged. Ultimately I think parents will become most interested when we do extend those invitations to see what their child is learning and when we are creative about developing positive and flexible ways parents can be included in school events.

Education impacts nearly every life. There will always be a desire to help students achieve their maximum potential. A more equitable distribution of state funds, a decrease in the cost of higher education, and the importance of maintaining relationships with parents are just three of the many areas deserving more focused attention.

**K: Strengthening the Teaching Profession:**

I love being a teacher. I can’t think of any place I’d rather be than in the company of 25 ten-year olds. I believe I strengthen the profession of teaching by sharing my joy of teaching and learning with everyone around me. I love learning new things. I like to read and discover new information from a variety of resources. When I learn something new, I get great satisfaction of sharing what I’ve learned with my students, and with my teaching partners, and with others. Sharing information with others almost invariably leads to new questions and new thoughts to pursue. Students in my classroom see me go to the computer, the dictionary, or reference and resource books daily and I almost always get a follow-up report once my children have gone home to continue the conversation with their families.

It was my great fortune to have a wonderful role model for my own beginning interests in education: my grandmother. I thought my grandmother was the smartest woman on the planet. She seemed to have an answer for every question I could ask. One day, she offered me one of her old teaching manuals. I couldn’t wait to play school. When I opened the manual up for the first time, I realized why grandma was so smart: right there-- in the margin-- in red ink --were all the answers! I remember thinking: “When I grow up, I’m going to have a book just like this one!” What a terrific early influence my grandmother had on my life. I found her joy for learning irresistible and extremely contagious.

I can still recall my earliest school experiences. I can remember the names of all my teachers and I can tell at least one anecdote from each of my elementary classrooms. These sustained memories assure me that what I am doing today will have a lasting impact in my students’ lives. Sharing a genuine joy for teaching and learning is just one way I am cultivating future excellent educators.

**L: Accountability:**

Current accountability programs seek to ensure that students in the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania receive as equal an education as any other child in the nation and that teachers are “continuously upgrading their knowledge and skill set”. The federal No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 seeks to quantify student (and therefore teacher) achievement as measured by the Commonwealth’s use of the PSSA administered each spring to students grades 3-8 and 11. Furthermore, teachers are asked to quantify their personal professional development through the Act 48 accounting system. Even though I understand the idealistic driving forces behind NCLB and Act 48, I work in a real classroom, with real students, who have me as their real “highly qualified” teacher (with two Master of Education degrees), and my students still fail to meet classroom and state standards for achievement. I believe schools are held more accountable for student success than might be fair. Award-winning newspaper columnist George Will reported on something he calls the “9/91 factor.” “Between birth and their 19th birthdays, American children spend 9 percent of their time in school, 91 percent elsewhere.” (Monday, January 07, 2002, *Waiting for Real Education Reform*). Do I have a better solution for accountability that produces both high achieving students and highly qualified teachers? No, but I would like legislators to consider requiring more accountability for those responsible for influencing my students’ achievement “*elsewhere*.”

***Section 5: Letters of Recommendation from Principal, Teacher, & Parent***